

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (original) A hitch and security system for a trailer that can be towed by a vehicle, said system comprising:

- a receiver tube rigidly coupled to the trailer and defining a receiver channel extending inwardly from a distal end of the receiver tube;
- a coupling hitch including a coupler adapted to be releasably coupled to the vehicle and an elongated hitch bar adapted to be releasably and snugly received in the receiver channel;
- a security plug including a security bar adapted to be releasably and snugly received in the receiver channel; and
- an elongated locking pin,

said system being shiftable between a towing position wherein the coupling hitch is coupled to the receiver tube by the locking pin and a secured position wherein the security plug is coupled to the receiver tube by the locking pin.

Claim 2 (original) The system according to claim 1,

- said hitch bar defining a hitch opening extending therethrough,
- said security bar defining a plug opening extending therethrough,
- said receiver tube defining a receiver hole,
- said locking pin extending through the receiver hole and the hitch opening when the system is in the towing position,
- said locking pin extending through the receiver hole and the plug opening when the system is in the secured position.

Claim 3 (original) The system according to claim 2,
said security plug including a flange proximate one end of the security bar,
said flange engaging the distal end of the receiver tube when the system is in the
secured position.

Claim 4 (original) The system according to claim 3,
said coupling hitch including a lip proximate the junction of the hitch bar and the
coupler,
lip engaging the distal end of the receiver tube when the system is in the towing
position.

Claim 5 (original) The system according to claim 2,
said locking pin comprising a generally cylindrical elongated main body presenting
first and second ends,
said locking pin including a fixed collar rigidly coupled to the first end of the main
body,
said locking pin including a removable collar rigidly coupled to the first end of the
main body,
said locking pin being shiftable between a locked position wherein the removable
collar is coupled to the main body and an unlocked position wherein the removable
collar is decoupled from the main body,
said locking pin being in the locked position when the system is in the towing
position and the secured position.

Claim 6 (canceled)

Claim ⁶7 (currently amended) The system according to claim 5; said removable locking
collar including a key,

said ~~removable locking~~ collar including a key-activated locking mechanism that only allows the ~~removable locking~~ collar to be coupled or decoupled from the main body when the key is received in the locking mechanism.

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Claim ~~8~~ (original) An apparatus comprising:


a trailer including a receiver tube defining a receiver channel extending inwardly from a distal end of the receiver tube, said receiver tube defining a pair of substantially aligned receiver holes positioned on generally opposite ends of the receiver tube, said receiver holes being spaced a first distance from the distal end of the receiver tube; a coupling hitch including a socket hitch defining a tow ball- receiving socket and an elongated hitch bar adapted to be releasably and snugly received in the receiver channel, said hitch bar defining a hitch opening extending entirely through the hitch bar, said coupling hitch presenting a protruding lip proximate the hitch bar, said hitch opening being spaced a second distance from the lip; a security plug including a security bar adapted to be releasably and snugly received in the receiver channel and a protruding flange proximate the security bar, said security bar defining a plug opening extending entirely through the security bar, said plug opening being spaced a third distance from the flange; and a key-actuated locking pin including a generally cylindrical main body presenting first and second ends, said locking pin including a fixed collar coupled to the first end and a releasable collar releasably coupleable to the second end, said main body being configured to be slideably and releasably received in the receiver holes, the hitch opening, and the plug opening, said first, second, and third distances being substantially equal.

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Claim ~~9~~ (original) The apparatus according to claim ~~8~~,⁷

said apparatus being shiftable between a towing position wherein the locking pin extends through the receiver openings and the hitch opening and a secured position wherein the locking pin extends through the receiver holes and the plug opening.

Claim ⁹10 (original) The apparatus according to claim ⁸9,
said locking pin being shiftable between a locked position wherein the removable collar is coupled to the main body and an unlocked position wherein the removable collar is decoupled from the main body,
said locking pin being in the locked position when the apparatus is in the towing position and the secured position.

Claim ¹⁰11 (original) A method of securing a trailer, said method comprising the steps of:

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- a) removing a coupling hitch from a receiver tube of the trailer;
 - b) inserting a security plug in the receiver tube;
 - c) extending a locking pin through the receiver tube and the security plug thereby securing the security plug in receiver tube; and
 - d) locking the locking pin in the receiver tube and the security plug so that unauthorized removal of the locking pin from the receiver tube and the security plug is prevented.

Claim ¹¹12 (currently amended) The method according to claim ¹⁰11,
step (a) including, removing the ~~locking security~~ pin from the receiver tube and the coupling hitch.

Claim ¹²13 (original) The method according to claim ¹¹12,
step a) including, using a key to decouple a locking mechanism of the locking pin from a main body of the locking pin.

Claim ¹³14 (original) The method according to claim ¹²13,

step d) including using the key to couple the locking mechanism of the locking pin to the main body of the locking pin.

Claim ¹⁴15 (original) The method according to claim ¹³14; and

e) prior to step a), towing the trailer with a vehicle by coupling the coupling hitch to a standard towing element of the vehicle.

Claim ¹⁵16 (original) The method according to claim ¹⁶15; and

f) prior to step a) , modifying the trailer to include the receiver tube.

Claim ¹⁶17 (original) The method according to claim ¹⁵16,

step f) including removing a standard hitch from the trailer, extending the receiver tube under the trailer at least one-fourth the length of the trailer, and welding the receiver tube to the trailer.

Claim ¹⁷18 (original) The method according to claim ¹⁶17,

step f) including welding of a cross member extending substantially perpendicular to the receiver tube to the trailer and the receiver tube.